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*John Talbot*  
*The Standards of the New Code*

*from Rev M. Barton*  
*Aug: 1874*  
A LETTER TO A FRIEND

ON THE

# Standards of the New Code of the Education Department

BY

JOHN MENET, M.A.

VICAR OF HOCKERILL, AND LATE CHAPLAIN OF THE HOCKERILL  
TRAINING COLLEGE

“The difference between a useful education, and one which does not affect the future life, rests mainly on the greater or less activity which it has communicated to the pupil’s mind, whether he has learned to think, or to act, and to gain knowledge by himself, or whether he has merely followed passively as long as there was some one to draw him.”

LETTER OF DR. ARNOLD—*Life*, vol. i., p. 41.

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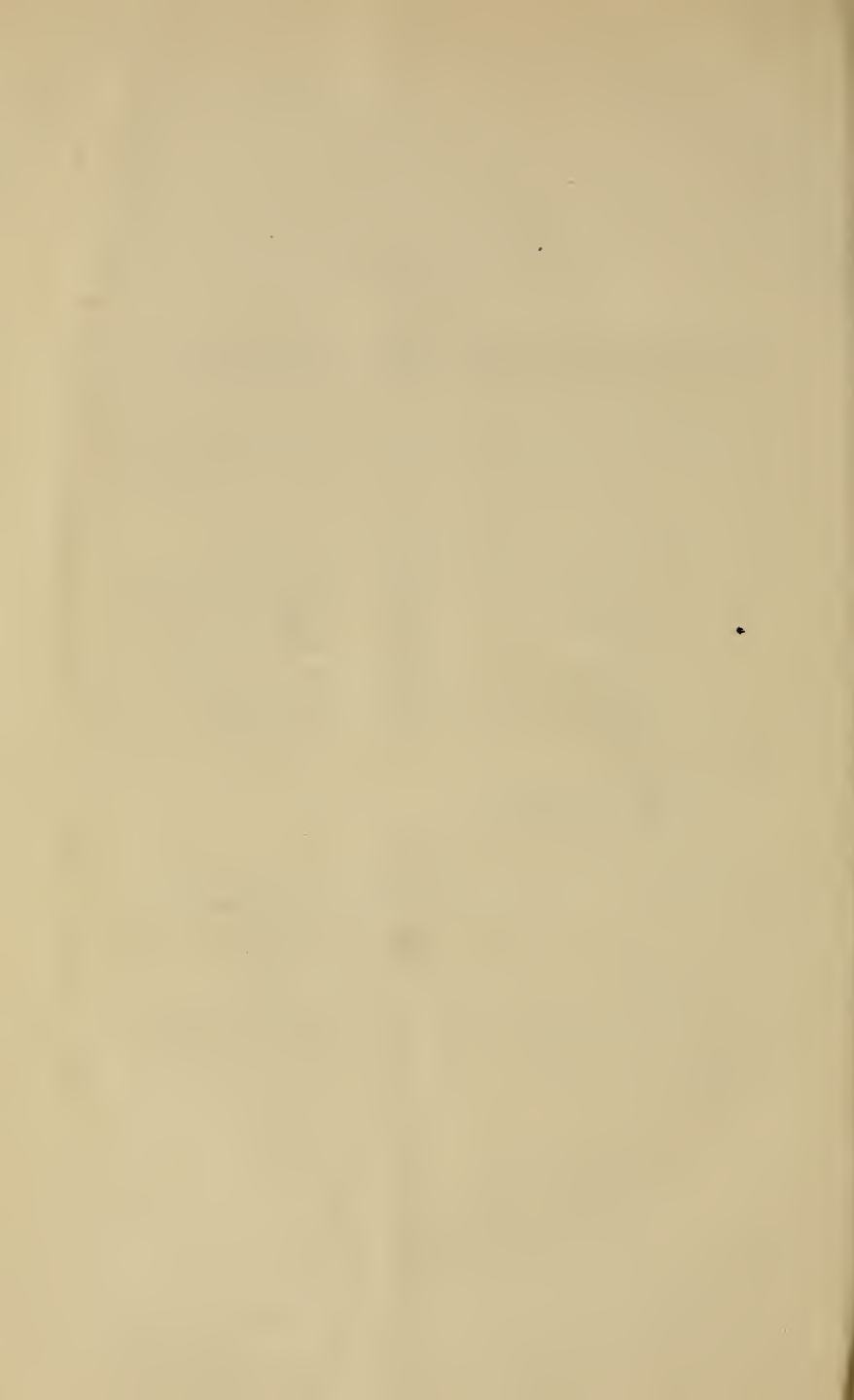
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## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION. Indications that alterations of the Code are at hand ..	5
I. Examination by Standards. Reasons why the system is radically vicious .. .. .	6
1. Standards must apply to all Schools, scarcely any two being alike	7
2. Standards, being of necessity a <i>minimum</i> , become a maximum ..	8
3. Standards discourage the progress alike of the clever and dull Children .. .. .	8
4. Standards encourage a mechanical routine in teaching .. ..	9
5. Standards tend to turn Schools into commercial ventures; their effect in this aspect on Managers, Teachers, and Children ..	16
6. Standards interfere with the proper organization of a School by classes .. .. .	18
7. Standards known only in Elementary Schools, and opposed to the practice of all other Schools and to common sense ..	18
8. Standards tend to the substitution of Examination for Inspection .. .. .	19
II. Outline of remedies proposed :	
1. Abolition of Standards .. .. .	21
2. Full Inspection with Examination .. .. .	21
3. Payment by Class .. .. .	21
III. The Pillars upon which a system of Education must rest, viz. :	
1. A due supply of Trained Teachers, to be secured by the Pupil Teacher system and the Training Colleges .. ..	22
2. Inspection .. .. .	22
Experience to be gained from the Minutes of 1846 .. ..	22
IV. Inspection. Consideration of some question connected with its efficient working .. .. .	23
Conclusion .. .. .	26





HOCKERILL, BISHOP'S STORTFORD,  
June, 1874.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

SYMPTOMS are not wanting that the principles on which the Education Grants are now made by the Department to Elementary Schools will be closely examined at no distant date. There seems to be a growing feeling that alterations are needed, and there appears to be some considerable uneasiness as to the quality of the Education given in those schools. The Reports of some of H.M. Inspectors; the letters of Dr. Abbott to *The Times*; the comparisons made between the English and Scotch Codes; the recent deputation of Managers and Teachers to the new Lord President; the address of H.M.I. Mr. Matthew Arnold in the *Macmillan* for last February; two very suggestive articles in *The Times* of April 9th, and May 4th; recent addresses of Sir James Kay Shuttleworth, happily still able to bring to bear upon this question his unrivalled knowledge and experience; and lastly the debate on Sir J. Lubbock's motion in the House of Commons on the 1st of May; all these show that the working of the New Code is likely to be more seriously questioned, and that public opinion is being informed and appealed to, and prepared for a decision. It looks as if the celebrated principle of "payment for results" were beginning to disclose not a few weak points, and the question seems likely to be asked in earnest, "Are the results worth what is paid for them? are they the results which we ought to have, and which we might have if we chose to seek them?" It is

difficult to answer this question without fighting over again the battle of the Revised Code (which I have no desire to do), for the essential principles of that Code still form the basis of the New Code now in force. Nor do I wish to weary you or any one else by showing how largely the predictions of those who opposed the Revised Code have been fulfilled. I would rather attempt with all diffidence to add a humble contribution towards the solution of the question, by challenging at once the principle on which the Grants on examination are now made to Elementary Schools.

I. A Grant is now made on account of every child who passes an examination in certain subjects laid down as "Standards." At first sight nothing can seem more natural, more economical, or more searching than this arrangement. The State says, "I will pay you so much for such a quantity of such an article; it shall be measured and valued, and I will give you the exact price. The plan will at least be economical if it be not efficient. If I do not get what I ask for I shall keep my money, and if you do not present your commodity for sale you cannot complain if I do not buy it."

Unfortunately, however, the principle of payment for results in this form is of very doubtful application when moral and intellectual results are in question, and when the end in view is not merely the acquisition of a limited amount of knowledge, but the mental and moral cultivation of children, to be attained only by teachers who combine moral and intellectual power with a high degree of technical skill. The working of this principle is forcing itself by degrees on the attention of those who earnestly desire the efficiency of our Elementary Schools. The alterations made in the New Code sufficiently prove that the late heads of the Education Department were alive to the danger of reducing the instruction in our schools to

a mere dull mechanical routine, and the encouragement of "special subjects," together with the greater freedom given to the Inspector in testing the results, are proofs that the difficulty was felt, and that there was an honest desire to meet it.

The differences of the Scotch Code as compared with the English are evidences of the same feeling. But the introduction of additional subjects, the temptation of mere money, and the multiplication of complicated examinations will not promote real intelligence and mental cultivation. They will not make children read and write better, and spell correctly, or help them to apply the rules of arithmetic to the necessities of daily life. It would be as reasonable to expect this, as to expect to promote the digestion of a dyspeptic by adding three or four different articles of diet when he had failed to digest the previous meal. We do not want more complications of age and standard and class, but less. We want more common sense, and more treatment of schools upon common sense principles. No alterations in detail will remedy a principle which I venture to assert is radically vicious.

Why, then, is the principle of Standards radically bad? Why is it a mistake to have these six steps of attainment, and to pay so much per step?

1. Standards framed by the Department must be made for all schools throughout the country.

But how is this to be fairly done when scarcely two schools are alike? How can Standards be framed which shall be suitable for schools in town and in country, and among settled as well as shifting populations; for schools which have been at work for years, and for those which have just gathered their scholars out of the highways and hedges, old and young utterly ignorant of the very elements of knowledge?

How can Standards of attainment be devised which will suit

the well-fed and well-clothed young people of the fashionable quarters of the West End of London, as well as the half-starved and thinly-clad children of an obscure and backward agricultural village, where boys and girls of all ages must be put into the same class, in order to meet the simple necessities of the case? Or how can Standards be adjusted to the different circumstances of scholars who in one case have to walk along a few yards perhaps of London pavement, and in another have to reach their schools as well as they can through a mile or two of the mud of country lanes, or the tracks of chalk downs, or of the fens? It is quite clear that there is a difficulty here at the first start.

How is this difficulty met? It must obviously be met by having a medium or comparatively low Standard. If not, the Standard would press so hardly on new and struggling schools, and those among shifting populations, that it could not be maintained. But it is equally obvious that Standards which may be much too difficult for such schools will be much too easy for other schools.

2. The *minimum* requirement laid down practically becomes the *maximum*. This is inevitable. If so much is required, that of course is accepted as the end to be attained. If so much will satisfy, what inducement is there to aim at more? If a penalty is imposed for not reaching a particular point, the question is not how to carry the instruction to the highest possible Standard, but how to escape the penalty. An average of mediocrity, not the pursuit of excellence, is stimulated by such a system.

3. Standards cut two ways. They discourage the full teaching of the quicker children on the one hand, and of the duller children on the other. There is no encouragement to pass the quicker children into the upper classes as rapidly as

possible. They would pass too soon through the six Standards, and would cease to have a commercial value. They would arrive too soon at the point at which no Grant can be earned for them.

On the other hand, for some of the duller children the rate of a Standard per year will be somewhat too rapid, and as these will secure little or no Grant in consequence of their dullness, there is not only no inducement to take the special pains which their case demands, but every inducement to neglect them, just as inferior grain might be put aside as scarcely worth the grinding. These considerations explain why so many children are often presented in the lowest Standards, and why some are not presented at all. If some children may be kept back, and others neglected, without violating the regulations of the Department, is it very surprising that Teachers should avail themselves of those opportunities of school-keeping on easy terms which the State itself suggests?

4. Standards not only confine the teaching within certain artificial limits, but encourage a dull mechanical routine in place of stimulating by every possible means the mental cultivation of the children. They bound and cramp the proper aims of the Teacher. It becomes a question of how much, or rather how little, will enable certain children to pass in the requirements of the Code. Teaching becomes a cramming for passes; the exact limits of the Code's demands are first carefully scanned, and then the shortest cuts towards the objects in view are devised. The question is, not how the Teacher may do his best towards instructing every child under his charge, but how the passing of certain children may best be secured. The Standards divert his attention from the School as a whole, and encourage the substitution of short and easy methods of getting passes for well-considered plans of teaching.



Let me notice, by way of illustrating what I have already said, how distinctly the present routine discourages a high standard of instruction, and therefore the formation of a good first class, and the retention of the elder children at school. Children entering a boys' or girls' school at seven years old, after passing through a good infant school, might easily pass into the first class at a quicker rate than a Standard per year. Being there they would be continually raising the standard of instruction in the class, and in the whole school. But as matters stand now there is no inducement to continue their instruction. They have passed their Standards, and the attention of the teacher is naturally directed to those who have not. Those children who would receive themselves the greatest benefit, and would most largely benefit the school and reward the Teacher's pains are the very children who would be the least considered. Is it very surprising if intelligent parents withdraw them, finding that they have got all that they can get in the school? They cannot even be examined in "special subjects." H.M.I. Mr. Kennedy, in his Report for 1872, says, "I don't wonder that even the most intelligent parents take away their children from the Elementary School after ten or eleven years of age; perhaps it is their very intelligence that makes them do so. Where there is little or perhaps nothing taught save reading, writing, and arithmetic, the school is in truth merely an infant school grown to undue and monstrous proportions. The minds of the scholars in the highest Standards make no worthy progress. They may have advanced a 'rule,' they may spell some harder words, but there is no true development. For mental progress and development it is essential that the scholars should be introduced to new subjects. . . . And if it ever be brought about that parents see this progress and development resulting from the school, we shall hear less about

the need of 'compulsion.' As we improve the school we shall improve the attendance."<sup>1</sup>

The principle of "payment by results," and its influence upon the character of the teaching, must be considered together as cause and effect. Now I have no desire to weary you by extracts from Blue Books, but I must prove my point as well as I can, and I will ask you or any one else whether it is possible that such passages as the following could have been written unless there was something essentially wrong in our system. And let it be remembered that the New Code, not less than the Revised Code, is based upon this principle of payment by results after individual examination of certain children. Mr. M. Arnold in a speech at Westminster (*Macmillan* for February, 1874) says, "Payment by results sounds extremely promising, but payment by results necessarily means payment for a minimum of knowledge, payment for a minimum of knowledge means teaching in view of a minimum of knowledge, and teaching in view of a minimum of knowledge means bad teaching. . . . The mere introduction of extra subjects could not cure the defects of the Revised Code; payment by results on examination in extra subjects involves the same bad teaching as in the case of elementary subjects; it is an educational law, this—the thing cannot but turn out so." H.M.I. Mr. Mitchell says in his Report for 1868 (and the remarks apply with equal force to 1874), "It may be proper to state that the condition of a school is not necessarily indicated by the number of passes. A very

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Education Department, 1872-73*, p. 102. It is very important in reading the Reports of H.M. Inspectors to consider whether they are written by the older Inspectors, who have had experience of what the best schools were under the operation of the Minutes of 1846, and can therefore contrast the results of those Minutes as compared with the results of the Revised Code and the New Code. This consideration gives a special force to the quotations I have made from the Reports of Mr. M. Arnold, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Fussell, Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Stewart, Mr. Watkins.

inferior school may rank with the highest in this matter. The one may just satisfy the claims of the Revised Code, while the other exhibits all the life, activity, and excellence which alone can be called education, but which is not indicated by the number of passes."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Fussell, who knew what the best schools were under the Minutes of 1846, says in his Report for 1870, "So far as my district at least is concerned, the methods of teaching all three subjects (reading, writing, and arithmetic) are on the average decidedly inferior to those commonly used in it before the introduction of the Revised Code."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Stewart, with a similar experience extending over a longer period, says in his last Report, "Teaching in its highest sense is almost extinct, and Teachers seem inclined to think that their responsibility is now limited to training children to pass the Examinations prescribed in the New Code."<sup>3</sup> Mr. Campbell evidently sighs for the good old times, and for the papers which he used to get before the Revised Code extinguished them. "With regard to what are called extra subjects, I could say a good deal. In the first place, the name is in my opinion a mistake. Such subjects as geography, grammar, and history, ought never to have been placed *without* the usual programme of Elementary Schools. Those who can remember the excellent papers which were worked by the scholars in a large majority of schools on these subjects many years ago, before *payment by results* and individual examination were the order of the day, will agree with me when I say that the cutting them out of the time-table has had a most injurious effect upon the intelligence of both Teachers and scholars, and has caused very little improvement in the teaching of the three mechanical subjects of reading, writing,

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Education Department*, 1868-69, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1870-71, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 1872-73, p. 155.



and arithmetic.”<sup>1</sup> Mr. Warburton speaks of “the lamentable narrowness of our Elementary School teaching.”<sup>2</sup> Mr. Watkins, one of the veterans in the Inspectors’ force, who has just retired from office, speaks with an experience and an emphasis which ought to secure a hearing: “I cannot conceal from myself, and must therefore report to your Lordships, that the general instruction under the New Code is meagre and often formal; not indeed so purely mechanical as under the Revised Code, but still unsatisfactory to a great degree. . . . I do not think that Teachers in general are sufficiently aware, or, if aware of it, sufficiently alive to the mischief, and I may say the *misery*, of such mechanical attainments as are too often found in our Elementary Schools.”<sup>3</sup>

Then with respect to “payment by results,” we find Mr. M. Arnold saying, “I have never concealed from your Lordships that our mode of payment by results, as it is called, puts in the way of the good teaching and the good learning of these subjects almost insuperable obstacles.”<sup>4</sup>

I believe that these extracts are not unfairly quoted, and it is impossible to read them without coming to the conclusion that real teaching has been sadly discouraged; that the principle on which the payments are based is unsound, and that the Teacher’s hands are tied, his aims contracted, and his proper responsibility taken away by the artificial limitations of the Standards. And it must be remembered that this is not a question as to irregular attendance, or as to compulsion, by way of gathering in the waifs and strays of our cities and lanes. The question is, not how to get the children to school, but what they will learn when they get there, and how they will learn it; whether we shall offer them the best education in our power, or

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Education Department*, 1872-73, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1872-73, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 1872-73, p. 217.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 1871-72, p. 29.

a certain amount of instruction little calculated to kindle their interest and promote their mental development. The question which the Code tempts Managers and Teachers to ask is, not how a child shall best be taught, but how he is to learn certain things so as to be able to produce them at an examination; in other words, not how he is to be taught, but how he is to be crammed. The *Times* has censured more than once with great justice the dry and uninviting character of the ordinary reading-books. If any one has a doubt as to the tendencies of our present system of teaching, I should recommend him to study carefully the literature which the Revised Code and the New Code have produced in the shape of reading-books, home-lesson books, and other publications; and to observe how ingeniously in many of them all the supposed requirements of the Code are provided for in one book in the shape of portions of the three "R's." But who can complain of such attempts when the whole structure of our system encourages them? They are a supply to meet a demand which is made by the highest Educational Authorities. But surely the question is not whether a child can perform certain operations in the "special" or the three elementary subjects, but whether he is so taught that his mind is really cultivated, his intelligence awakened, and his interest roused; whether, in fact, he is receiving anything like a mental discipline which will fit him for his work in after life. That question ought to be carefully answered, and I fear that the answer would be very unsatisfactory. For this system of Standards offers very little encouragement to technical skill in teaching. It does not encourage the practice of the art of teaching, and the cultivation of the best methods of imparting instruction in each subject. It is continually drawing away the attention of the Teacher as to what will pay, and to the best, that is, the shortest and easiest means of securing passes.

And it is almost needless to add that this does not apply to the Head Teachers only. If their methods are such as they too often are, such also are the methods, or such rather is the absence of method, on the part of the Pupil Teachers. The Masters and Mistresses are not parties to the Memorandum of Agreement, as they were in the old Apprenticeship, a term which conveyed its own meaning, and implied corresponding duties. An apprentice learns his trade from his master, but I fear that the amount of special teaching in the art of teaching which Pupil Teachers receive now is too often uncommonly small. They, like the Head Teachers, take their share in the manufacture of "passes," and very dreary work it must frequently be; Mr. Campbell says very plainly, "Boys see too much of the drudgery which the New Code entails upon the young Teachers in a school to wish to choose that for their permanent profession."<sup>1</sup> If they are not well cared for, why should they feel that interest in their work without which it becomes a drudgery, and which alone can make hopeful candidates for training in our Training Colleges. Let it be considered what is implied in such passages as the following from three of the most experienced Inspectors: Mr. Kennedy says, "I am sorry to say that I have an impression on my mind, and I believe it is shared by some of my colleagues, that the Pupil Teachers are not so well taught as they used to be in former times."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Stewart says, "If we consider how much of the daily business of our schools is left entirely, and I think I may add, unwisely, to apprentices throughout the whole term of their service, it is clear that if their technical instruction is neglected an injury is done to the schools in which they are employed of a very serious and lasting character."<sup>3</sup> Mr. Watkins

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Education Department, 1872-73, p. 63.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid. 1872-73, p. 104.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid. 1872-73, p. 152.*

says, "I am inclined to think that where Pupil Teachers receive duly their amount of private instruction from the Head Teacher, where they are really instructed how to teach, and their lessons are criticised when given with care and judgment, they do not fall short of the standard of past years." But the next passage explains why there are too few of such candidates. "In many schools this part of the Head Teacher's duty is insufficiently done, sometimes almost entirely neglected, and the consequence is obvious."<sup>1</sup> I have no doubt that the Principals of Colleges who know what candidates for admission were under the Minutes of 1846, and what they have been since the revolution under the Revised Code, could give, as indeed some of them have given, some very instructive information on this subject.

5. But I have not yet finished my indictment against the Standards, and the payments made on account of them. I cannot forbear to glance at the commercial element which has been introduced into our schools, and at its effects upon Managers, Teachers, and children. The particular form of paying the Grant introduced by the Revised Code has induced many Managers to abdicate their own functions wholly or in part, and leave the Teacher more or less to "farm" the schools.

In the Reports of the Education Department for 1868-9, and 1869-70, when an index was added, "Farming Schools" became one of the headings, and the subject is mentioned by five of the Inspectors, and in the following year by at least one more. Mr. Scoltock says, "The methods of paying Teachers are various, but the worst of all, 'school farming,' is, I much regret to say, still in existence."<sup>2</sup> In the following year Mr. Wilde speaks of it as the "common but very bad practice of farming the schools."<sup>3</sup> Mr. Stewart speaks of it as "the practice of throw-

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Education Department, 1872-73*, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1869-70, p. 355.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 1870-71, p. 241.

ing on Teachers a share of the pecuniary responsibility which each school may be said to represent.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, the Teachers are invited to turn the school into a commercial venture, and to make the earning of as large a Grant as possible the one end in view. Again, where matters do not go quite so far, the fact that the Teacher’s salary, in a very large number of cases, depends to a great extent on the Grant, introduces far too often and far too prominently the question, not as to what is best for the children, but what will pay at the end of the year. And surely Managers in some measure tie their own hands, and refuse their full responsibility when they make so much of the salary depend upon the Grant. A Teacher might fairly say in answer to some recommendation of a Manager, “I quite agree with you, and would gladly adopt your suggestion, but what you advise may not pay so well, and I must look to my means of subsistence.”

Again, the form of the Grant has led to the term that a child “earns” so much—surely a most mischievous idea. A child costs, we will say, two pounds a year, and pays some seven or eight shillings in school pence, often much less: the Grant payable is perhaps twelve or thirteen shillings per child, so that each child costs the management fifteen shillings or a pound annually. Notwithstanding this, each child who passes is spoken of as performing a certain work for the benefit of the school, for which wages are given; and in many cases the commercial element is still further strengthened by the return of a certain amount in some shape to the children who pass in the Standards. I am not sure how the information is obtained which enables the Managers to know exactly what the passes are, and what, therefore, are the proper sums to be returned. But does not all this put the children in a wrong position?

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Education Department, 1868-69, p. 237.*



6. Standards interfere with the organization of a school. A school should be organized by classes, not Standards; but now there are two bases of organization, a real and an artificial one; and the latter interferes with the former, as a matter of course, proceeding as they do upon different principles. There ought to be no thought in a Teacher's mind as to what Standard a child passed in last year or is to pass in this year. The only question ought to be as to where the child will receive the greatest amount of benefit which the school can afford him.

7. But why are Standards to exist in an Elementary School when they are never heard of elsewhere? Why should an Elementary School be conducted on principles on which no other school is worked?

In any Middle Class, Private, Grammar, or Public School, a proposal to teach and examine by Standards would be laughed at and rejected at once. The plan is as much at variance with the whole educational system of the country as it is with common sense.

What would a parent say to a Master who announced the system of his school to be that the child would not only be limited to a certain curriculum, but that he would not be allowed to pass through it too rapidly, lest he should get too soon into the first class; and that as to the annual examination, that was only of certain selected scholars who had reached a certain standard of proficiency, and were likely to pass?

What, on the other hand, would a Master say if the parent informed him that he should pay strictly for results in certain subjects: that when the boy came home at Christmas and Midsummer he should be examined by an independent person, and that the amount of the half-yearly cheque would depend on the results of the examination?

I suppose that both parent and Teacher would be equally

dissatisfied with these proposals, and justly. But, then, why are they more tolerable when applied to Elementary Schools? Surely the principles on which any good school is conducted are simple enough. Managers and Teachers are bound, on receiving a child into their school, to do everything they can for the child's spiritual, moral, and intellectual culture, without hindrance or limitation of any kind whatsoever. No other considerations ought to come in the way, and if they never do, except in purely Elementary Schools, why are these to be exceptions? The dull child should surely be taught as carefully as possible, and the question of what the child is likely to "earn" should never occur at all. The quick child should have every chance which the school can offer him, without any consideration as to whether he may not be too soon at the top of the school, and cease at too early an age to be an object for which money is payable by the State.

8. But one of the most disastrous effects of the Standards has still to be noticed; I mean their effect upon Inspection properly so called, as distinguished from mere Examination. The question now is not what the whole school is worth as an institution for doing its best for every child, but what a certain number of selected children in it have been prepared to do. The hands of the Inspector are tied, though less under the New Code than under the Revised Code; and he must accept what is presented to him, if fairly within the Standard requirements, though he may feel that the results are not worth paying for, and distrusts the means by which they are obtained. Inspection cannot go on at the same time as that peculiar and artificial examination framed by the composers of the Revised Code, and as the Examination is a necessity, the Inspection falls into the background or disappears altogether. In their instructions to the Inspectors in 1862, my Lords state that the Article

prescribing the Standards "does not exclude the inspection of each school by a highly educated public officer, but it fortifies this general test by individual examination." But what has experience taught? that the "individual examination" is the all-important question, and that the "general test" seldom takes place at all, and that when it does take place, it is only in serious cases that the "highly educated public officer" feels himself at liberty to make deductions for faults of instruction. He knows well enough that he cannot improve schools by such pains and penalties, and that for the most part they must be limited to gross cases; and he also knows that if the standard work passes muster it would be very difficult to justify deductions, when the letter of the bond has been carried out. He would have, I should think, small support from the Department against the obvious remonstrance of the Managers: "I give you what the Code asks for, and I ought to be paid in full. What do you mean by imposing penalties for faults of instruction, when 70, 80, or 90 per cent. of the children (as the case may be) have passed?" The Inspector is now, like the Schoolmaster, relieved of the responsibility which he ought to have, and once had. As a matter of fact, the children who have not attended a certain number of times are not examined at all, and the Managers are not bound to present even those who have completed their attendances. The school is broken up by the separation of the "Standard" children from the rest. The remainder is sometimes sent home, sometimes put in a classroom by themselves—certainly not inspected as a rule. I know it will be said that the Inspectors *may* examine all the children, but I suspect that exact returns of the number of Inspections as distinguished from Examination, and of the time spent in carrying out such Inspections, would be very suggestive. Nor would it be without interest to ascertain how much of the work was



done by the Inspectors as distinguished from the Assistants, who probably take a considerable proportion of it.

II. But it may be said that I am only making complaints without suggesting a remedy.

I do not presume to point out in detail by what methods the Grant may be administered so as to cure the defects of the present system. The difficulties of any change would be great, but certainly not insuperable, if the broad principles on which the Grants should be made could be clearly laid down and agreed upon.

1. First, then, I venture to submit that the Standards should be altogether abolished. If this were done the hands of the Inspectors and the Teachers would be untied.

The Teachers would be free to make the best schools they could, unfettered by artificial and harassing regulations. The Inspectors would be free to see whether the schools were as good as they ought to be, taking all the circumstances of each school into account. They would be free to stimulate the energies of the Teachers, and to improve continually the course of instruction, and the methods of giving it.

2. Standards being out of the way, the proper organization of schools would be preserved, and the children would be examined in their classes.

It should then be a condition that every child in the school should be examined, and not merely a selected number.

3. It might be arranged that a payment per class should be made, after an individual examination of all the children in it, on condition of a certain number passing that examination to the satisfaction of the Inspector, their attendance being taken into account.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "He did not wish the noble Lord to pledge himself without making the fullest inquiry; but the more he considered the matter the more he was convinced that we might give a little more public money for the general results of the

I do not presume to say how all the details should be arranged, but the present, or similar deductions—if we must proceed upon that system—to those now made under Article 32, *a, b, c, d*, might be made from the total sum payable on account of all the classes. The question of paying a larger sum to the higher classes, on condition of a higher standard of instruction, would also have to be considered.

III. But supposing such a system adopted, its success would depend (1) upon the body of Trained Teachers, (2) upon the character of the Inspection.

The pillars upon which Sir James Kay Shuttleworth rested the system of the Minutes of 1846 were two :—

1. The staff of Trained Teachers and of Pupil Teachers which it called into existence.

2. A thorough inspection by able, cultivated, and experienced gentlemen.

The fact is undeniable that the best of the Elementary Schools which these Minutes created were probably nearly as good as they could be, and were scarcely surpassed by any Elementary Schools in Europe. It was clearly stated by the Duke of Newcastle's Commission that those who reached the first class in such schools received an "excellent" education.

Such schools were not produced by "Standards," nor by such unreal examinations as we have now.

Those who knew them best regret them the most, whether they take into account the intelligence and attainments of the

teaching of classes instead of an individual examination."—*Speech of Rt. Hon. W. E. Forster, May 1, 1874.*

"Where is the remedy? In general, in giving greater freedom to the Teacher, greater freedom to the Inspector; in particular I am inclined to think the remedy lies in retaining the present examination for only the first, second, and third Standards, and beyond that point paying Grants, not on individual examination, but on the report that the classes have been properly instructed."—*Speech of Mr. M. Arnold (Macmillan, February, 1874).*

children, or the preparation of the Pupil Teachers. We are not left in doubt as to how good schools may be created, extended, and encouraged.

If we could infuse into the Code a little more of the spirit which breathed throughout the system of the Minutes of 1846, not forgetting the view then taken of Inspection and the instructions to the Inspectors, we might look much more hopefully upon the future of our Elementary Schools.

IV. The questions connected with one of the two pillars on which the excellence of our schools must depend do not fall within our present limits. The Pupil Teacher system with the Training Colleges, and the Inspection, being these two pillars, let me say a few words upon the last only.

What is there to prevent our having again such Inspection as we once had: an Inspection with which many of H.M. Inspectors are perfectly familiar?

I answer, Nothing at all, if you get rid of the Standards, because then the responsibility of the Inspector would be restored to him. His hands would be untied, and he would be free to accept or decline "results," according to his judgment of their value. The Inspector would then be able to consider the circumstances of each case, to adapt his examination to the school, and to stimulate the Teachers to aim at the highest possible standard of instruction. For I hope you will not suppose that I am recommending a less thorough examination than that which is made now. I am asking for an examination which would be fairly within the range of each school, according to its circumstances and standing, and which at the same time would be far more searching and instructive than that which the New Code enforces. For it would not only be an examination of the whole school, but also a test of the methods of teaching, and of the amount of mental cultivation which the

children were receiving. It might really have been thought, from the way in which individual examination was spoken of when the Revised Code was introduced, that it was a new discovery. Those who, like myself, had the privilege of knowing what Inspection was under the Minutes of 1846 in the hands of some of the able and experienced Inspectors created under those Minutes could tell a very different tale.

But I fancy that an objection would be raised at once by many Managers if they heard such a proposal as this. They would say that the Standards are a protection to them against the Inspector, and that they are not prepared to place such a responsibility as I have sketched out in his hands. They would say that they should never know what to expect, and that, in plain words, they would be far too much at the Inspector's mercy. Now I frankly own that there is much in the objection, unless the Inspection itself be such as to command full confidence. And I venture to doubt whether this can be altogether the case, unless something more is done towards training the Inspectors themselves for the difficult and delicate functions which they have to discharge. The want of this special knowledge would be felt far more if the fuller responsibility which they ought to have were restored to them. It is difficult to see, under the present arrangements, how newly-appointed Inspectors, however able, can possess or have the means of acquiring that special technical knowledge which they ought to have, and without which they can hardly be expected to command the confidence of Managers, and still less of Teachers who understand their business. The fact that laymen only are now appointed makes it still more unlikely that they will have much knowledge of school matters at the time of their appointment. Formerly the Inspectors of Church Schools were clergymen, and many of them brought to the discharge of their office great

familiarity with the management of such schools, acquired in their own parishes. But this cannot be the case now.

Sir James Kay Shuttleworth provided for the training of the Inspectors by placing them first as Assistant Inspectors with those who were already experienced. I think no one can have watched the working of that system without being convinced that it was a very wise one. I suspect that it was a great mistake to give it up. It is impossible to suppose that an inexperienced person, however able and distinguished, can safely be intrusted with what ought to be an Inspector's responsibility in a district which is placed under his sole management. We shall never have the schools which we ought to have, and might have, unless the Inspection is full and discriminating, and therefore conducted by those who are enthusiastic about Education themselves, and communicate some of their enthusiasm to those with whom they come in contact. But it is hard to see how Inspectors or Managers or Teachers can feel much enthusiasm for such a complicated, dry, mechanical system as that into which we have drifted.

It would be essential for the success of such Inspection as I have mentioned that its duties should be discharged in such a way as to do full justice to the schools, that it should not be hurried or capricious, or carried out at later hours of the day, or too much adapted to the exigencies of railway trains, or left mainly to the Inspector's Assistant.

Moreover, it should never be forgotten that an Inspector is practically to the Education Department what a Consul is to the Foreign Office,—that is, the only source of information respecting the grave questions on which that Department must decide. The Inspectors are probably the only persons who have opportunities of judging how far Minutes really secure the objects they have in view, and how far a large and



growing expenditure of public money is justifiable. When, therefore, we consider the Inspection with reference to the Department, the Training Colleges, the Managers of schools, the Teachers, and the Pupil Teachers, we cannot fail to perceive its immense capabilities and importance, and how essential it is to strengthen the pillar on which so much depends. If that be weak we may be quite sure that the system, however seemingly sound and imposing, is being gradually undermined, and that its fall is a question of time.

I will conclude with the hope and confident belief that all who have to consider these questions will be influenced by that faith in the power of Christian Education which was the key to the success of Sir James Kay Shuttleworth in the Minutes of 1846; which characterized all the utterances of the late Vice-President, Mr. Forster; and which we have every reason to expect from the present Vice-President, Lord Sandon. If only the traditions of the Revised Code can be forgotten, and the question fairly and boldly considered on its own merits, I have no fear of the result. There are many difficulties in the way, but none which may not be overcome by some of that enthusiasm which so noble a work should be found to inspire. We want, on the one hand, less routine, less mechanism, less complication, fewer pains and penalties. We want in their place, on the other hand, a much fuller and clearer recognition of what Education really is, more freedom for Inspectors, more liberty for Teachers, more cultivation of mind, and more common sense. Let the weights be removed which press on all sides, and everybody concerned will breathe the more freely.

I remain, yours very truly,

JOHN MENET.







